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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-07 AID-05 /073 W
----------171114Z 078133 /21
O 171108Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0696
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 07828

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS PFOR PINS CG AO FR
SUBJ: FRENCH REPLY TO ZAIRIAN ASSISTANCE REQUEST

REF: PARIS 7679

1. PRESIDENTIAL AFRICAN AFFAIRS ADVISOR RENE JOURNIAC TOLD US MORNING OF MARCH 17 THAT THE GO AHEAD FOR THE SHIPMENT OF MUNITIONS FOR FRENCH EQUIPMENT HELD BY ZAIRE HAD BEEN GIVEN. AN AIR ZAIRE SUPER DC-8 IS ENROUTE FOR FRANCE. IT WILL BE LOADED IMMEDIATELY AND IS EXPECTED TO DEPART ON A NON-STOP FLIGHT TO ZAIRE TONIGHT.

2. THE FRENCH INTEND TO CONTINUE TO TELL THE PRESS THAT ZAIRE'S REQUEST IS UNDER STUDY, JOURNIAC SAID. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE REGRETTED THAT MOBUTU HAD CHOSEN TO PLAY DOWN THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE INVASION. IF INSTEAD HE HAD DISPLAYED A COUPLE OF CAPTURED CUBANS AND SOME SOVIET ARMS, "WHICH ARE EASY TO PROCURE", THE PUBLIC OPINION PROBLEM CREATED FOR WESTERN COUNTRIES MAKING DELIVERIES TO ZAIRE WOULD BE GREATLY REDUCED.
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3. JOURNIAC EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE SHABA OPERATION IS DESIGNED PRIMARILY TO PUT ZAIRE OUT OF ACTION AT A MOMENT WHEN SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS ARE COMING TO A HEAD. BY SENDING IN SMALL BANDS OF GUERRILLAS, WHOSE TOTAL NUMBERS APPEAR TO BE IN THE THOUSANDS, THE SOVIETS CAN BRING ZAIRE PRACTICALLY TO A

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STANDSTILL, THUS ELIMINATING ITS MODERATING INFLUENCE, AND GIVING A FURTHER BOOST TO THE EXTREMISTS IN THE RHODESIAN NATIONAL FRONT.

4. JOURNIAC DEPLORED THE "TOTAL INCAPACITY" OF THE ZAIRIAN FORCES WHO ARE UNABLE TO FIGHT A CONVENTIONAL BATTLE, LET ALONE A WELL-ORGANIZED GUERRILLA WAR SUPPORTED, AT LEAST IN ANGOLA ITSELF, BY THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS. HE THOUGHT MOBUTU WOULD SOON BEGIN TO PRESS FOR MORE SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT, WHICH HIS OWN FORCES COULD NOT USE EFFECTIVELY EVEN WITH INCREASED WESTERN TECHNICAL SUPPORT, AND WHICH, AT ANY RATE, WOULD BE UNSUITED FOR GUERRILLA WARFARE. THE FRENCH PLACE HIS REQUEST FOR PUMA HELICOPTERS IN THIS CATEGORY. WHEN HIS UNREASONABLE REQUESTS ARE REFUSED, MOBUTU WILL THEN BLAME THE WEST FOR HIS LACK OF SUCCESS AGAINST THE INVADERS.

5. HAVING UNBURDENED HIMSELF OF THESE LAMENTS, JOURNIAC HASTENED TO UNDERLINE HIS CONVICTION THAT WESTERN ASSISTANCE TO MOBUTU IS ESSENTIAL. THE MAN MAY HAVE HIS FAULTS, BUT HE DID ACHIEVE THE MIRACLE OF PROVIDING ZAIRE WITH STABILITY. ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT REPLACE HIS REGIME WOULD BE WORSE, PROBABLY MUCH WORSE, JOURNIAC CONCLUDED.
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